

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1082
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

C O N F I D E N T I A L DAMASCUS 8793

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR SY PLO
SUBJ: PLO PREPARATORY COMMITTEE TO MEET DECEMBER 30 TO
DISCUSS ENLARGED PNC

1. RELIABLE SOURCE WHO MET RECENTLY WITH PNC CHAIRMAN KHALID FAHUM REPORTED THAT FAHUM STATED PLO PREPARATORY COMMITTEE WILL MEET DEC 30 TO DECIDE UPON ENLARGED PNC. ACCORDING TO SOURCE, FAHUM PERSONALLY FAVORS PNC EXPANDED TO 400 MEMBERS BUT IS OPPOSED BY FEDAYEEN GROUPS FEARFUL LEST EXPANSION DILUTE THEIR STRENGTH. ARAFAT DESCRIBED BY FAHUM AS MAN IN THE MIDDLE WHO CURRENTLY UNDECIDED WHETHER TO EXPAND PNC.
2. SOURCE CONTAINED THAT FAHUM STILL PROMOTING IDEA OF SYRO-JORDANIAN-PALESTINIAN CONFEDERATION AS MOVE THAT COULD POTENTIALLY RESOLVE SOME OF THE THORNIEST NEGOTIATING OBSTACLES WHICH BLOCK ISRAELI AGREEMENT ON ESTABLISHMENT OF PALESTINIAN STATE ON WEST BANK AND GAZA. FAHUM
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NOTED THAT CONFEDERATION COULD ALSO FACILITATE DEMILITARIZATION OF PALESTINIAN STATE. IN HIS REASONING, CONFEDERATION ITSELF WOULD NOT BE DEMILITARIZED, BUT ONLY PALESTINIAN COMPONENT OF CONFEDERATION. THIS ENVISAGED SOLUTION WOULD THUS ADDRESS ITSELF TO BOTH ISRAELI AND PALESTINIAN SECURITY CONCERNS.

3. SOURCE ALSO HAD OPPORTUNITY TO MEET RECENTLY WITH SAIQA LEADER ZUHAYR MUHSIN. SOURCE SAID MUHSIN HAD LITTLE POSITIVE TO SAY ABOUT YASIR ARAFAT. MUHSIN STATED THAT ARAFAT -- AND FOR THAT MATTER PLO -- ONLY AS STRONG THESE DAYS AS SYRIA PERMITS THEM TO BE. MUHSIN REITERATED THAT WITHOUT SYRIAN BACKING, PLO WOULD LOSE MUCH OF ITS POTENCY.

4. COMMENT: DECISION WHETHER TO EXPAND PNC, WHICH SCHEDULED TO MEET BY END OF FEBRUARY, WILL REVEAL EXTENT TO WHICH FEDAYEEN ORGANIZATIONS WILLING TO ACCOMMODATE THEMSELVES TO PRESSURES FROM DAMASCUS AND POSSIBLY OTHER ARAB CAPITALS. EXPANSION OF PNC HAS BEEN KEY PLANK OF FAHUM PLATFORM FOR SOME TIME, BUT AS NOTED IN JERUSALEM 1757, ARAFAT MAY ALSO GAIN FROM INFUSION OF WEST BANKERS INTO ENLARGED PNC. FAHUM'S ATTEMPT TO UTILIZE POTENTIAL CONFEDERATION VEHICLE TO OBVIATE NEGOTIATING PROBLEMS STRIKES US, AS IT DID OUR SOURCE, AS IMAGINATIVE EFFORT BY PALESTINIAN MODERATE TO LAY GROUNDWORK FOR FUTURE NEGOTIATIONS.
MURPHY

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